[11 cont.]

369 584 583 dismissing all present or future suitors. Originally this was an indemnity to be shared among the unhappy rivals, or was intended as reimbursement for the advances collected by the parents of the girl without her knowledge. Some reputedly avaricious families demand it several times.

369 583 3. The Marriage Portion. Its amount does not rigorously follow the fluctuations which characterize the other expenses. It amounts to 2,500 francs and is fixed by a marabout, by converting the heads of cattle of Koranic law into French money. Religious in nature and hence escaping the whims of fashion, its importance is wholly secondary. One can delay five or six years or more before paying it. Many monogamous households get along very well, even though not a sou of the marriage portion has been paid. Payment becomes obligatory, however, when [587] the husband wishes to contract a second marriage.

4. Ngegenay (The Pillow). This is an optional expense, but one that good breeding requires. It consists of leaving under the wife's pillow a sum of money and a quantity of little gifts [585] (perfumes, sandals, bracelets, etc.) the day after the first nuptial contact. It is like a manifestation of the joy that one felt upon finding his wife to be virgin.

5. The Decoration. This is the essence of the Saint-Louis marriage. All of the expenses listed up to here are more or less private, or in any case little known, except for the marriage portion, by the neighboring quarters or the relatives far away from the city. For the Decoration, the payment is preceded by widely disseminated announcements several months in advance. It is exhibited before all the relatives of the married couple, their friends, their acquaintances, before all the persons of inferior castes, who go everywhere and who will repeat what they have seen, in brief, before the city.

Optional in the beginning, it today assumes such an obligatory character that only in Saint-Louis do the instructors dare to avoid it or to minimize its importance. Of what is the Decoration composed? Essentially of a box, a basket for effects, and a basket of small goods, but most especially what one has been able to amass that is precious and rare, and which has not

[11 cont.]
369 been distributed for the older children.
583 a) The Pani (the box). In appearance it may be ordinary or magnificent, according to the aesthetic inclinations of the sisters of the husband. Often it is an old metal box that contained tidbits. In any case it is not the appearance that interests us, but the contents, which generally are:

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12 louis d'or 51;
2 gold necklaces, we say "chains";
2 pairs of gold earrings;
1 or 2 pairs of gold bracelets;
4 or 8 sautoirs, medals of gold which encircle the figure.

[435] The box is found already prepared among the jewelers. Its minimum price is 6,000 francs. Its value easily reaches 20,000 francs and more.

b) The Basket for Effects. This is an expense of recent character and of practical import. Formerly, on the day of
•[585] the nuptials, the husband gave his wife a bundle of banknotes as personal property accruing to her from her marriage. But the tradition that the woman should be generous made this money disappear immediately, distributed among the persons of caste who came from everywhere. I would have willingly given, if I had known it, the name of the first Saint-Louis man who replaced this packet of money with a quantity of clothing, thus putting his wife in a position to benefit from it herself. The basket actually contains articles whose number and quality vary, but which constitute a veritable trousseau no less, which may last for years. For an individual from a "great family" or a
369 "peasant," it includes as much as:
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12 robes [boubous] of crepe de Chine (of which 4 of 8 meters each are obligatory, 160 francs per meter);
12 robes of rich bazin (4 obligatory of 8 meters each at 225 francs per meter);
4 camisoles, ordinary or of Lagos fabric;
[12] 4 camisoles of crepe de Chine (extravagantly cut to a length of 4 or 5 meters);

[12 cont.]

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12 silk headkerchiefs (6 obligatory, valued at 500 to 600 francs each;
12 kerchiefs with "edging" [mouchoirs de "bord"] (6 obligatory, valued at 300 to 375 francs each);
2 silk handkerchiefs;
4 Mauritanian mats, on which the objects are detailed, valued at 500 francs each, and most of all rare, which costs dearly.

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c) Basket of Small Goods. This is a creation of the well-bred man of Saint-Louis, who during the 3 or 8 or 15 days that the nuptials last wishes the guests to be treated well. The young people of both sexes are supposed to crowd into the spacious rooms, suitably decorated and illuminated, and to be "overwhelmed" by the songs of the griots. The husband considers their rejoicings an imperious duty and offers them a basket generally containing several packs of cards, packages of toothpicks, perfume, razor blades, pipes, tobacco, incense, kohéal, fans, tidbits, etc.

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d) The Gifts. These expenses are the final obligations and bear the name of "decorations of castes." As we have noted, since the first visit of the husband, the persons of caste have not officially benefited further from his generosity or from that of his wife. But custom requires that these people be gratified. It should be noted also that the guers have their men of caste who are faithful to them from father to son. In their presence and when they are equal to their task. Whatever their fortune or rank (in the Europeanized society), a guer cannot address any other persons of caste without their permission. Only one coiffeuse arranges the hair of a young girl until her marriage, and one jeweler repairs or makes her finery. The marriage is the ceremony of their dedication and the occasion of proving to them that they have not placed their confidence in vain. These persons comprise two categories: that of the woman and that of the man. Let us note at once that the latter cannot be too demanding without showing a lack of the proper attitude. They form part of the general staff of the husband, and, under penalty

[576] [302] [306]

[12 cont.]

369 of humiliation, they must, as must he, show proof of generosity.
585 How does one go about "decorating these persons"?
565 There are the griots, the jewelers, the cobblers, and also ... the captives; the husband gives 1,000 francs or more to each grouping, and his relatives a supplementary sum, always distinct from that given by the husband, of such a nature that each caste receives 10,000 or 20,000 francs or more. This sum will be divided under the direction of the caste head.

585 This ceremony concludes the marriage, because im-
369 mediately, for three streets around, there is nothing but hysteria and hubbub, with griots coming and going, as well as drivers (3).

3. We have not said anything about the expense for the food. Each morning during the whole period of the nuptials, the husband must give a sum large enough to provide food for all of his guests and those of the wife. It is obligatory for the parents of the wife to send supper to the mother of the husband on the first day. I have seen a case that merits being noted. On the occasion of a recent marriage, the parents-in-law sent from Saint-Louis to Louga a wagon of food, 25 large basins, "tolis," containing 25 foods estimated in 1939 at 4,000 francs, deducted from the meals of the mother, which were, it was said, transported by five or six carts.

Consequences of the high price of marriage on the manners and customs

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581 Such expenses greatly hinder young people from marrying. Most of them, if they do not wish to remain single, are obliged to leave their city to contract bush marriages, which are almost